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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/PD (ANYASO, TITUS, LISEBY), AF/W (ACOOK)  
MCC FOR DARIUS MANS AND JONATHAN BLOOM

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMCA](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN: GPRA Report - MCA-Benin's press conference

11. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: Following the March 30-31, 2009 visit to Benin by the Vice President and the Deputy Vice President for Africa of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted a press conference to discuss the results of the visit. Ambassador Gayleatha B. Brown, and the Minister of Port Economy and new President of MCA-Benin's Board of governors, M. Issa Badarou, spoke at the well-attended press conference in the presence of government representatives and high-ranking officials from Benin.

12. DATE OF ACTIVITY: April 2; Third quarter, FY 09.

13. PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION/OBJECTIVES: The government of Benin's recent decision to modify the configuration of MCA-Benin's board of governors provoked a rash of hostile commentary in the local media. Two days after the MCC Vice President's visit to Benin, this press conference was held in order to clarify the situation and to inform the general public about the functioning of MCA-Benin and the new steps taken by the government to ensure a speedy implementation of the program.

14. MPP UMBRELLA THEMES AND AUDIENCE REACHED: Democracy and Good Governance: At least 75 participants including U.S. Embassy officials, government representatives, all major Cotonou-based independent media and the government-controlled print and electronic media outlets attended the press conference where Ambassador Gayleatha B. Brown spoke.

15. RESULT/IMPACT: Excellent. This timely press conference was an opportunity to brief the general public about the conditions surrounding the MCA program in Benin and the keen interest expressed by both the U.S. government and the GOB in the successful implementation of the program. During the press conference, the Minister of Port Economy, newly appointed President of MCA-Benin's Board of Governors, explained that the decision to appoint a Minister to head the Board of Governors stems from the government's concern to ensure accountability and proper oversight of the program. The new President of MCA-Benin's Board of Governors underscored the importance of the reforms initiated to make the port of Cotonou more competitive and that, at the half-way point from the completion of the program, there is need to work faster and more efficiently.

In her remarks, Ambassador Gayleatha B. Brown stressed that there is no disagreement between the governments of Benin and the United States regarding the management and the continuation of the program, stating that transparency and good program management were in the interest of both parties. Ambassador Brown stated that the United States is supportive of the government's decision to appoint Ministers as members of the Board of Governors and Mr. Issa Badarou as President of the Board of Governors.

16. NON-USG SOURCES OF IN-COUNTRY FUNDING/IN KIND SUPPORT:

The conference was held in the conference room of the newly built Beninese Ministry of Foreign Affairs building, and the excellent and professional media coverage of the conference was organized by the Ministry.

17. QUALITY OF USG SUPPORT: Excellent. The Ambassador's presentation during the press conference was very well received. Ambassador Brown was recognized in the local media for her keen interest in the successful implementation of the MCA program in Benin and her determination to work with the Government of Benin to achieve timely completion of the program.

BROWN